

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM USMISSION GENEVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3613

S E C R E T GENEVA 9104

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR RH UK

SUBJECT: RHODESIA CONFERENCE: INDEPENDENCE DATE DEBATE DRAGS ON

DEPT PASS LONDON

FOR SCHAUFLE FROM WISNER

1. I HAD LONG AND USEFUL CONVERSATION WITH IVOR RICHARD THE AFTERNOON OF NOVEMBER 15. RICHARD RECAPITULATED THE EVENTS OF THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS AND TOLD ME THAT MUGABE AND NKOMO HAD MET WITH HIM PRIVATELY AFTER THIS MORNING'S PLENARY SESSION WAS OVER. THEY HAD CAUCUSED FOR SOME TIME BEFORE CALLING ON HIM.

2. NKOMO AND MUGABE COMPLAINED THAT THEY HAD NEVER SEEN THE STATEMENT WHICH RICHARD READ AT THE OPENING OF THE NOVEMBER 15 PLENARY SESSION. HAVING NOT SEEN IT, THEY WERE FORCED TO CALL FOR AN ADJOURNMENT. RICHARD QUALIFIED THE PATRIOTIC FRONT'S ASSERTION AS ABSURD. NKOMO AND MUGABE HAD SEEN AN EARLIER DRAFT. THEY HAD A SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT STATEMENT. THEY HAD BEEN BRIEFED IN FULL AND THE OBSERVERS HAD BEEN DISCUSSING THE CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT WITH THEM FOR THE LAST 48 HOURS.

3. NKOMO AND MUGABE WENT ON TO ARGUE THAT SINCE THEY HAD NOT REALIZED HOW THE BRITISH INTENDED TO HANDLE

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THE DATE OF INDEPENDENCE, THEY NEEDED TO STUDY THE

ISSUE FURTHER AND WANTED A NEW PLENARY SESSION ON NOVEMBER 16. RICHARD AGREED TO CALL ONE FOR 11:00.

4. LATER IN THE AFTERNOON SALIM CALLED RICHARD TO SAY THAT HE WAS NOT SURE WHAT THE PARTIOTIC FRONT WOULD DO. HE SUGGESTED FURTHER PROGRESS COULD BE MADE IF THE BRITISH CONFIRMED MARCH 1, 1978, AS A FIRM DATE AND REMOVED ALL CONDITIONS. RICHARD TOLD SALIM THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF CHANGING THE DOCUMENT FURTHER. HE REMINDED SALIM THAT THERE ARE FIVE DELEGATIONS AT THE CONFERENCE AND THREE HAVE AGREED TO PROCEED ON THE BASIS OF CHAIRMAN'S DOCUMENT. SALIM AGREED TO RECONSULT NKOMO AND MUGABE. NO OTHER OBSERVER HAS APPROACHED THE BRITISH.

5. IN CALLING FOR ANOTHER PLENARY SESSION, RICHARD BELIEVES THE PATRIOTIC FRONT HAS MADE A TACTICAL MISTAKE. EITHER THEY WILL HAVE TO EAT "HUMBLE PIE" AND AGREE TO MOVE ON TO A DISCUSSION OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT OR THEY WILL CALL FOR AN AJOURNMENT. IN EITHER CASE, THEIR CREDIBILITY WILL SUFFER.

6. RICHARD DOES NOT INTEND TO GIVE IN EASILY TO A CALL FOR ADJOURNEMENT. IF NKOMO AND MUGABE ASK FOR THIS, HE WILL TELL THEM THAT SINCE THREE DELEGATIONS ARE PREPARED TO GO AHEAD, HE WILL BEGIN BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE ADJOURNMENT QUESTION AND WILL HINT THAT AT THE SAME TIME, HE WILL PURSUE CONSULTATIONS ON THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT. "I INTEND TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE CONFERENCE IS NOT CONTROLLED BY ONE DELEGATION OR, IF FACT, A PART OF ONE DELEGATION," HE SAID. IF THE BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS CONFIRM RICHARD'S IMPRESSION THAT MUSOREWA AND SITHOLE ARE PARPARED TO PROCEED, HE WILL CONSIDER CONVENING A NEW SESSION AND TELLING THE PATRIOTIC FRONT THE DECISION STANDS THREE TO TWO. HE WILL THEN GIVE NKOMO AND MUGABE ANOTHER CHANCE TO RECONSIDER THEIR POSITION. SHOULD NKOMO AND MUGABE ON NOVEMBER 16 ASK FOR MORE TIME TO CONSIDER THE CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT, HE IS INCLINDED TO GRANT THEM A FURTHER DELAY.

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7. RICHARD WILL CONSULT WITH THE DELEGATION HEADS IN PRIVATE SESSIONS IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY POSSIBILITY MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE BE FORCED TO TAKE A PUBLIC STAND AT THE SIDE OF THEIR AFRICAN COLLEAGUES. BOTH MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE WISH TO MOVE AHEAD AND MUZOREWA, REALIZING THE TACTICAL ADVANTAGE OF CORCING NKOMO TO WALK OUT, IS PREPARED TO CONSULT ON THE INTERIM

GOVERNMENT IN HIS RIVAL'S ABSENCE.

8. RICHARD CONCLUDES THAT THE PATRIOTIC FRONT'S POSITION IS WEAK. THEY HAVE LOST THE SYMPATHY OF THE PRESS AND THE FRONT LINE PRESIDENT, INCLUDING MACHEL, SEEMED LINED UP AGAINST THEM. THE GHANAIA COMMISSIONER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FELLI, CALLED ON RICHARD ON NOVEMBER 14 AND AFTER HE HAD READ THE CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT SAID HE FOUND IT UTTERLY REASONABLE AND WOULD TELL THE NATIONALISTS SO. RICHARD ASSUMES THAT NKOMO AND MUGABE ARE FEELING PRESSURES FROM OTHER AFRICAN QUARTERS.

9. SOME OF THE BRITISH PRESS IS CRITICIZING RICHARD FOR HAVING PROPOSED A 15 MONTH PERIOD OF TRANSITION. RICHARD CONTINUES TO FEEL THAT HIS DECISION WAS CORRECT. "AT SOME POINT I HAD TO HAVE A SHOWDOWN WITH MUGABE", HE SAID, IF THE CONFERENCE WAS TO HAVE ANY DISCIPLINE. IF HE HAD NOT STOOD UP TO MUGABE, RICHARD BELIEVES THAT VORSTER WOULD HAVE DECIDED TO WITHDRAW HIS SUPPORT AND "VORSTER'S SUPPORT WILL BE ESSENTIAL IN THE COMING WEEKS."

10. RICHARD CLOSED HIS ACCOUNT BY SAYING THAT IF NKOMO AND MUGABE ARE FOLLISH ENOUGH TO WALK OUT ON THE QUESTION OF THE DATE OF INDEPENDENCE "THEY WILL DO SO AGAINST ALL ADVICE AND I WILL DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO MAKE SURE THE CONFERENCE GOES ON." JOSHUA NKOMO KNOWS, RICHARD ARGUED, THAT IF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO BE FORMED IN GENEVA, NKOMO WILL WANT TO BE A PART OF THE DELIBERATIONS.ABRAMS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETING CHAIRMAN, INDEPENDENCE, INTERIM GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PROGRESS REPORTS, NEGOTIATIONS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976GENEVA09104
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P840099-0694
From: GENEVA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761149/aaaabpvu.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 MAY 2004 by woolflhd>; APPROVED <08 SEP 2004 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RHODESIA CONFERENCE: INDEPENDENCE DATE DEBATE DRAGS ON
TAGS: PFOR, PDEV, RH, UK, (RICHARD, IVOR)
To: STATE SS LONDON
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006